

so that we can both better educate those teachers teaching those children with disabilities in how to teach both children with disabilities in integrated classrooms, in inclusive classrooms, as well as learn from their experiences in doing so, both to the benefit of both children in those inclusive classrooms; and use evidence-based research that we know is constantly coming towards us in terms of how to identify children with autism, how to identify children with learning disabilities and use those new findings and be able to employ them to the benefit of these children's growth and their development.

Mr. Chairman, that is why we've introduced this amendment.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. McKEON. Mr. Chairman, I rise to claim the time in opposition, even though I support the gentleman's amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Without objection, the gentleman from California is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. McKEON. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I believe that this is an improvement to the bill and will assist Head Start programs which are required to spend 10 percent of their funds on services to disabled students in improving the quality of their programs to serve young children.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Chairman, I'd yield 2 minutes to my good friend and colleague from New York, JOHN HALL.

Mr. HALL of New York. Mr. Chairman, I won't need that much time.

Thank you to my colleague from Rhode Island and from the other side of the floor, who just spoke in favor of this amendment. I would like to take a moment to commend all who support this issue.

There are 27 Head Start facilities in my district, and they provide critical services to families that want their children to have every opportunity to grow and succeed. I'm glad that the bill we are considering today will expand access to Head Start and help make sure that America's less well-off children can have a great chance of long-term success when they arrive in our schools.

The amendment will help to meet these goals by providing more support for inclusive education. This is the practice of teaching children with disabilities in the same classrooms as those without disabilities, and it has largely been shown to have a positive effect on the development of those children with disabilities.

The Head Start Act already requires that 10 percent of enrollment slots go to students with disabilities, and the actual number of enrollees is even higher, at about 13 or 14 percent.

Although these classrooms can provide increased educational benefits, they also present teachers and staff

with increased demands. Teachers and staff have often been forced to try to handle greater responsibilities without the necessary resources. This amendment would help to bridge that gap by allowing training and technical assistance funds to be spent to enhance the ability of classroom staff to meet the needs of eligible children in inclusive classrooms.

Providing more resources for teacher training and support, this amendment would make great strides in improving the quality of the educational experience for all children in a class.

Another fundamental goal of the Head Start program is to make sure that all children have the best chance of success in school and in life. The second provision of this amendment will help to further serve those goals by working to make sure that the inclusive classroom environment benefits every student, including typically developing children. It would do so by allowing research and evaluation funding to be used in further studying the impact of inclusive classrooms on the educational experience of children with or without disabilities.

I urge my colleagues to support it.

Mr. McKEON. Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. Speaker, let me just say, I offer this amendment in honor of my aunt, Eunice Kennedy Shriver, who started the Special Olympics, who has inspired me in this work; and my uncle, Sarge Shriver, who was the first and founding director of Head Start, both individuals who are inspirations to me and to millions in this country.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY).

The amendment was agreed to.

AMENDMENT NO. 7 OFFERED BY MR. PUTNAM

The Acting CHAIRMAN. It is now in order to consider amendment No. 7 printed in House Report 110-116.

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Chairman, I offer an amendment.

The Acting CHAIRMAN. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

Amendment No. 7 offered by Mr. PUTNAM:
Page 37, beginning on line 10, strike "subsections (a), (b), and (c) of".

Beginning on page 39, line 21, strike "except" and all that follows through line 3 on page 40, and insert as period.

Beginning on page 40, strike line 7 and all that follows through line 10 on page 45, insert the following:

"(c) DESIGNATION ON COMPETITIVE BASIS.—

"(1) SELECTION.—From among entities that submit plans under subsection (b), the Secretary shall, after"

Beginning on page 52, strike line 20 and all that follows through line 2 on page 53.

Page 53, line 3, strike "(g)" and insert "(d)".

Page 53, line 7, strike "(h)" and insert "(e)".

The Acting CHAIRMAN. Pursuant to House Resolution 348, the gentleman

from Florida (Mr. PUTNAM) and a Member opposed will each control 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

□ 1630

Mr. PUTNAM. Mr. Chairman, I yield myself 3½ minutes.

Mr. Chairman, I rise today to urge my colleagues to support a very important amendment to H.R. 1429, and I want to commend Mr. KILDEE, Mr. MILLER, Mr. McKEON, and the others who have worked so hard on this important bill.

Head Start is a tremendously important program in the early childhood education continuum, but it is also desperately in need of reforms.

As we all know, the purpose of Head Start is to help disadvantaged children be better prepared to enter school. But we are doing those children an enormous disservice and squandering taxpayer dollars if we do not hold the providers of Head Start services to a higher level of accountability. The existing language in 1429 allows for automatic 5-year renewal of applications, automatic renewal, if they simply meet minimum standards to the satisfaction of the review panel. Providers that don't meet the standards must enter into open competition for acceptance of their applications. I would respectfully submit this does not go far enough.

For the sake of ensuring the programs are performing better than minimal or better than good enough and as a safeguard for the taxpayers who foot the bill, I believe we should require that all Head Start providers face open competition. Such competition will encourage a higher level of performance and serve as a check on unscrupulous practices.

Mr. Chairman, I am very familiar, unfortunately, with what can happen when a provider is allowed to skate through without the discipline that comes from competition. In my own district, the Polk County Opportunity Council became a poster child for mismanagement and abuse since its dealings first became public in 2003, which actually had followed a probationary status just several years before. Years of investigation have revealed breathtaking examples of malfeasance and mendacity.

There has been everything from sweetheart deals involving the purchase of office equipment to claims for nonexistent hurricane damages, essentially amounting to insurance fraud. At one point the PCOC even fabricated a false "certificate of compliance" from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which it tried to use to short-circuit other investigations of its misdealings. It took 3 years, 3 years, to defund that agency, and the entire appeals process along the way, and this only applies to the Head Start program, the entire appeals process was paid for not by the agency,